

LOW-COST/NO COST RECOGNITION OPTIONS CHECKLIST

(Adapted from University of Michigan's Recognition Program,
<http://www.hr.umich.edu/umatter/101.htm>, found 9-27-11)

In tight financial times, ongoing, meaningful recognition provide an effective, low cost way of raising morale and encouraging higher levels of performance. Here are 97 ideas to help create a culture of appreciation in your everyday work.

1. ☐ Create a Hall of Fame wall with photos of outstanding employees.
2. ☐ Give employees time off to give blood.
3. ☐ Arrange for a team to present the results of its efforts to upper management.
4. ☐ Encourage, enable and empower staff to excel.
5. ☐ Plan a surprise picnic.
6. ☐ Answer your assistant's telephone for a day.
7. ☐ Encourage and recognize staff who pursue continuing education.
8. ☐ Post a thank you note on an employee's desk.
9. ☐ Wash the employee's car in the parking lot during the lunch hour.
10. ☐ Create and post an "Employee Honor Roll" in core area.
11. ☐ Acknowledge individual achievements by using employee's name when preparing a status report
12. ☐ Make a photo collage about a successful project that shows the people that worked on it, its stage of development and its completion and presentation.
13. ☐ Bring an employee bagged lunches for a week.
14. ☐ Manager could find out the person's hobby and buy an appropriate gift.
15. ☐ Make a thank-you card by hand.
16. ☐ Manager could buy balloons and leave them at person's desk with a thank you note.
17. ☐ Make and deliver a fruit basket for an employee or team
18. ☐ Manager could buy and inscribe a favorite book as a gift.
19. ☐ Establish a place to display memos, posters, photos and so on, recognizing progress towards goals and thanking individual employees for their help.
20. ☐ Swap a task with an employee for a day – his/her choice.
21. ☐ Establish a "Behind the Scenes" award specifically for those whose actions are not usually in the limelight.
22. ☐ Manager could purchase the latest best-selling management or business book or subscription to a trade magazine for the employee.
23. ☐ Nominate the employee for the formal award program (if you have one and if their actions meet the criteria).
24. ☐ Keep in mind that managers should serve as coaches to indirectly influence rather than demand desired behavior.
25. ☐ Take time to explain to new employees the norms and culture of your department.
26. ☐ Give special assignments to people who show initiative.
27. ☐ Give an employee a developmental assignment or allow them to attend a special training.
28. ☐ Design a "Stress Support Kit" that included aspirin, a comedy cassette, wind up toys and a stress ball – or design your own.
29. ☐ Present "State of the Department" reports periodically to your employees acknowledging the work and contributions of individuals and teams.
30. ☐ Empower the employee who is motivated by performance enrichment with more freedom or lead role on a project
31. ☐ Set up a miniature golf course in your office, using whatever materials you have on hand. Set aside an afternoon or evening to hold a mini golf tournament. Have each area design their own "hole" and give a prize.
32. ☐ If your team is under pressure, bring a bag of marbles to work and take a break to have a contest – a sure stress reliever.
33. ☐ Serve ice cream sundaes to all of your employees at the end of a project.
34. ☐ Have a "Staff Appreciation Day" where the managers supply, cook and serve food.

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- 35. ☐ Recognize employees who actively serve the community.
- 36. ☐ Serve a team a hero party sandwich at the end of an assignment, for a job well done.
- 37. ☐ Give employees an extra long lunch break.
- 38. ☐ Name a continuing recognition award after an outstanding employee.
- 39. ☐ Include an employee in a "special" meeting.
- 40. ☐ Give a shiny new penny for a thought that has been shared.
- 41. ☐ Manager could purchase and send flowers to an employee's home as a thank you.
- 42. ☐ Allow employees to attend meetings in your place when you are not available.
- 43. ☐ Manager could purchase a unique pin to serve as a memento for a task well done.
- 44. ☐ Wear color-coded name tags in a staff meeting to indicate significant achievements – such as length of service, successful project completion, etc.
- 45. ☐ Create an Above and Beyond the Call of Duty (ABCD) Award.
- 46. ☐ Hold informal retreats to foster communication and set goals.
- 47. ☐ Ask your boss to attend a meeting with your employees during which you thank individuals and groups for their specific contributions.
- 48. ☐ Pop in at the first meeting of a special project team and express your appreciation for their involvement.
- 49. ☐ Provide a lunch (at manager's expense) for project teams once they have made interim findings. Express your appreciation.
- 50. ☐ Send a letter to all team members at the conclusion of a project, thanking them for their participation.
- 51. ☐ Start an employee recognition program that's linked to organization's core values, mission, and/or goals
- 52. ☐ Manager could purchase a personalized coffee cup and give to employee
- 53. ☐ Plan a surprise achievement celebration for an employee or group of employees.
- 54. ☐ Start a suggestion program.
- 55. ☐ Give Mr. Goodbar (candy bar) Awards (Manager pays for candy bars)
- 56. ☐ Recognize employee's personal needs and challenges.
- 57. ☐ Give an employee a blue ribbon for achievement. (Manager pays for blue ribbon)
- 58. ☐ Write a letter or email of praise recognizing specific contributions and accomplishments. Send a copy to senior management and the employee's personnel file.
- 59. ☐ When you hear a positive remark about someone, repeat it to that person as soon as possible (Face-to-face is best, e-mail or voice mail are good in a pinch).
- 60. ☐ Call an employee to your office to thank them (don't discuss any other issue).
- 61. ☐ If you have a department newsletter, publish a "kudos" column and ask for nominations throughout the department.
- 62. ☐ Publicly recognize (if that's their preference) the positive impact on operations of the solutions employees devise for problems.
- 63. ☐ Acknowledge individual achievements by using employee names in status reports.
- 64. ☐ Video tape a special event and share copies with participants.
- 65. ☐ Express an interest in employee's career development goals.
- 66. ☐ Post a large "celebration calendar" in your work area. Tack on notes of recognition to specific dates.
- 67. ☐ Design and give magnets with appropriate messages. (Manager pays for magnets)
- 68. ☐ Create and string a banner across the work area.
- 69. ☐ Give a deserving employee a mug filled with treats.
- 70. ☐ Give a framed poem (poster or card) as a thank you. (Manager buys frame)

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- 71. ☐ Greet employees by name.
- 72. ☐ Practice positive nonverbal behaviors that demonstrate appreciation.
- 73. ☐ Support "flex-friendly" schedules.
- 74. ☐ Encourage employees to identify specific areas of interest in job-related skills. Then arrange for them to spend a day with an in-house "expert" to learn more about the topic.
- 75. ☐ Encourage employees to participate in community volunteer efforts.
- 76. ☐ Share verbal accolades – forward positive voice mail messages.
- 77. ☐ Actively listen to co-workers, especially when discussing their accomplishments and contributions.
- 78. ☐ Use 3x5 cards to write "You're special because..." statements. People can collect the cards and refer to them when things aren't going perfectly.
- 79. ☐ Have a recognition event created by a peer group that decides what they will give and why they will give it.
- 80. ☐ Keep a supply of appropriately funny notes that can be given as immediate rewards. Keep the supply visible – in a basket or box in your office. (Manager pays for notes)
- 81. ☐ Widely publicize suggestions used and their positive impact on your department.
- 82. ☐ When someone has spent long hours at work, send a letter of thanks to his/her home thanking their spouse or significant other.
- 83. ☐ Throw a pizza lunch party for your unit recognizing specific actions or behaviors that demonstrate organization values.
- 84. ☐ Acknowledge and celebrate birthdays (with permission from employees; don't assume everyone wants to celebrate their birthday).
- 85. ☐ Give a note reading, "Thank you. You are a _____!" Attach a roll of Lifesavers. (Manager pays for Lifesavers)
- 86. ☐ Make a necklace of lifesavers and give it to someone "For being the "lifesaver of _____."
- 87. ☐ Serve popcorn and lemonade on Friday (especially after a particularly hard week). Manager's treat.
- 88. ☐ Allow an employee to choose his/her next assignment.
- 89. ☐ Recognize a team accomplishment by designating that team as consultants to other teams.
- 90. ☐ Give a puzzle as an award to a problem solver. (Manager purchases puzzle or find one on the internet)
- 91. ☐ Recognize those committed to personal health and wellness.
- 92. ☐ Have weekly breakfasts with groups of employees to recognize behavior that aligns with core values.
- 93. ☐ Treat an employee to lunch.
- 94. ☐ Give out gold coins for a job well done. Manager can buy gold coins at one of the popular dollar stores.
- 95. ☐ Bake a gift (cookies, bread, etc.) for an outstanding employee or team.
- 96. ☐ Send birthday cards to employees' homes, signed by their Executive Director or CEO.
- 97. ☐ Smile. It's contagious.